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Report of the fifty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee (4-6 March 2014)

Report of the Secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Choi Seokyoung (Republic of Korea), opened the meeting. The Vice Chairpersons, His Excellency Ambassador Pedro Comissário (Mozambique) and His Excellency Ambassador Carsten Staur (Denmark), assisted in chairing parts of the meeting on the first and second days.

2. The Chairperson welcomed Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Panama, Peru and Senegal as new observers.

II. Adoption of the agenda of the 59th meeting and of the 2014 work programme

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/65/SC/CRP.1) was adopted without comment.

4. The Committee adopted the 2014 work programme (EC/65/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

III. Regional activities and global programmes

5. In her introduction to the session on regional activities, the Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) briefed the Committee on the challenges that characterized UNHCR's operations over the past year, noting that the number of countries with major emergency operations continued to grow while ongoing emergencies increased in complexity and scale. She described the work being undertaken to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of UNHCR's emergency response to these unprecedented and growing demands. Every region and every part of the organization had been obliged to share the burden and contribute staff to support the emergency operations. The Assistant High Commissioner spoke about the increasingly dangerous settings in which UNHCR worked, recognizing the courage of colleagues – particularly national staff – and partners, who daily put themselves in harm's way to help those in need. The Office continued to be driven by the philosophy of "stay and deliver," but this required resources to mitigate risks, with an effect upon the cost of delivery.

6. While responding to emergencies, UNHCR was also reinforcing efforts to facilitate durable solutions in protracted refugee situations. The Assistant High Commissioner informed the Committee that a Solutions Steering Group had been created to reinvigorate the Office's approach to solutions and provide support to the field for promising initiatives. Though some 15 million dollars had been reallocated to support such projects, additional funds were needed. The Assistant High Commissioner also spoke about UNHCR's refugee coordination model which, while respecting the Office's accountability for refugees, allowed greater flexibility to avoid duplication with the cluster approach in situations involving both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Finally, she underlined the importance of partnerships and highlighted a number of new initiatives, particularly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), aimed at maximizing the comparative advantages of the organizations involved.

A. Africa

7. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa presented the update, drawing attention to the explosion of new emergencies and the aggravation of existing ones which had obliged the Office to issue a succession of supplementary appeals. He highlighted that

the bulk of UNHCR's funding for Africa was allocated to immediate life-saving activities at the expense of investing in solutions, and that this was unsustainable.

8. Many delegations expressed serious concern about the crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan. UNHCR was commended for its work in leading the protection cluster in the Central African Republic and enhancing protection for populations at risk and countering religious intolerance through reconciliation efforts. The effective leadership and proactive work of UNHCR in South Sudan were critical to ensuring protection and assistance. The Office was urged to advocate strongly for humanitarian access in South Sudan. Numerous delegations expressed concern about the growing militarization of refugee sites on the continent. It was urgent to ensure the disarmament of armed elements and the identification, separation and internment of combatants to ensure security in the camps and surrounding areas. In relation to integrated missions, the importance of ensuring neutrality and independence of humanitarian action was stressed. Member States underscored the need to have dedicated staff and sufficient resources to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

9. The Committee welcomed the efforts to bring solutions to protracted situations, in particular the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees. The signing of the tripartite agreement for the voluntary return of Somali refugees from Kenya was an important step, although delegations stressed that returns must be voluntary and carried out with appropriate consideration given to each person's particular circumstances and security conditions in areas of return. Durable solutions inside Somalia required investments that went beyond the humanitarian community. The need for greater security for Somali refugees in Kenya was highlighted, as well as the importance of addressing food insecurity, possibly through the use of cash or voucher programmes. The importance of ensuring effective coordination both inside Somalia and in the camps was highlighted.

10. There was concern about the gap in funding humanitarian programmes for refugees and IDPs in Africa, particularly for activities related to self-reliance and livelihoods in an effort to bring about solutions. While it was difficult to find funds for these programmes, doing so was important as putting closure to protracted situations would allow funds to be redirected to emergencies. Return and reintegration assistance for refugees going home, such as those returning to Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was vital for the realization of durable solutions. Collaboration with development actors was also indispensable from a human security perspective. The Committee appreciated UNHCR's efforts to make resettlement a priority, though one delegation urged the Office to ensure that it was preserved for those genuinely in need of this durable solution.

11. In response, the Director conveyed his gratitude for the support of the Committee and for the many tributes to colleagues working on the ground. He thanked host, resettlement and donor countries, as well as those governments that were providing troops to support peacekeeping operations and stabilization efforts in places like the Central African Republic. On funding, he assured Member States that UNHCR was making every effort to secure resources for the operations in Africa. At the same time, he said it was important that the Office continue to work towards achieving greater efficiency in the use of its resources. For example, structural investments related to the construction of refugee camps required a large portion of the resources available, and this could be better spent on assisting populations and host communities. He assured the Committee that while emergencies commanded more resources, UNHCR would continue to advocate for funding to invest in opportunities for durable solutions.

B. The Americas

12. The Director of the Regional Bureau for the Americas emphasized five themes for the region: (i) opening and maintaining asylum space; (ii) mainstreaming an age, gender

and diversity approach into planning and implementation; (iii) addressing displacement due to transnational organized crime and other forms of criminal violence; (iv) preventing and reducing statelessness; and (v) providing protection and solutions in the Colombia situation. The Director also called on delegations to seize the opportunities offered by the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees with the "Cartagena +30 process." The year-long consultative process will culminate with the adoption of a declaration and new plan of action to guide the protection and solution agenda for the Americas for the next decade.

13. UNHCR's regional update was followed by the intervention of the Colombian Minister for Foreign Affairs, whose statement focused on Colombia's political, institutional, legislative and financial efforts to support and strengthen solutions for IDPs and Colombian refugees. She renewed her Government's commitment to collaborate with UNHCR in these endeavours, and expressed Colombia's support of the Cartagena +30 process. The Committee Members expressed appreciation to the Minister for her statement and many voiced support for the peace process in Colombia.

14. Many delegations welcomed the Cartagena +30 process as a timely initiative to bring new momentum to the protection framework in the region and stressed its importance as a State-led process to further the protection of IDPs or refugees fleeing conflict and violence. The majority of delegations that took the floor addressed the critical importance of solutions, including through the exploration of existing human mobility schemes for migration. Many States pointed to the forthcoming implementation of the Comprehensive Solutions Initiative for refugees in Ecuador and Costa Rica and the Transitional Solutions Initiative for IDPs in Colombia as positive examples of progress towards solutions. Delegates expressed confidence in the region's progress toward the establishment of fair asylum systems and the eradication of statelessness.

15. Meanwhile, concerns on irregular and mixed migration, asylum systems, unaccompanied minors, human trafficking and smuggling in the region were reflected in many statements. Some delegations expressed concern about displacement caused by transnational organized crime and other forms of violence in Central America. Receiving countries remarked that the number of asylum applications based on non-conflict related violence seem to be growing. A number of delegations insisted on the importance of the Quality Assurance Initiative to strengthen national asylum systems. Low recognition rates, tight timelines for application and admissibility requirements were nevertheless raised as concerns by some States.

16. In reply, the Director of the Americas Bureau welcomed the genuine interest expressed by delegations in the Cartagena +30 process and reiterated UNHCR's readiness to accompany the process, together with civil society. She echoed calls for concrete measures to be linked to the new plan of action that will emerge from the process. She reiterated the importance of the Quality Assurance Initiative as a tool to improve the low rates of acceptance and agreed that issues such as gender-based persecution and unaccompanied minors continue to be important areas of concern. Finally, she thanked the Committee for its support as well as its encouragement to share best practices from the region.

C. Asia and the Pacific

17. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific began her presentation with two major protracted situations in region: Afghanistan and Myanmar. She urged the international community to remain committed to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. She emphasized the importance of supporting host countries and thanked them for their generosity and progressive policies. The Director underlined the complex

nature of the challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, including the irregular movements of persons and the tragic maritime incidents that often follow. She emphasized the importance of comprehensive multilateral approaches, such as the Bali and Almaty Processes, and the importance of exploring partnerships to work effectively in the urban context. She also commented on the progress in addressing statelessness in the region. Finally, she provided a brief update on her recent mission to Myanmar and Thailand with the Assistant High Commissioner.

18. Many delegations expressed support for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and acknowledged the generosity of the host countries. The need to redouble efforts towards solutions was reiterated, as well as building absorption capacity within Afghanistan for returnees by bridging the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. Many countries conveyed their commitment to continue supporting solutions through the provision of resettlement places.

19. Delegations agreed that irregular movements, including maritime arrivals, are a major challenge in the region and expressed support for this being one of UNHCR's regional priorities. Several delegations encouraged progress on a regional response through multilateral cooperation. One delegation mentioned that its resettlement programme would be expanded to include refugees from Myanmar in Malaysia. Several delegations expressed their appreciation for UNHCR's work in the Philippines in response to Typhoon Haiyan. Referring to the Transformative Agenda, one delegation sought UNHCR's feedback on the coordination of humanitarian assistance based on its experience there.

20. The Director responded that Typhoon Haiyan was the first Level 3 emergency in Asia, and that the humanitarian response was a good learning experience, as UNHCR was able to deliver on protection in an inter-agency context by working closely with a strong government lead. Though much remains to be done, the Director expressed appreciation for efforts to address irregular movements in the region. Responding to concerns about addressing the root causes of displacement in the region, the Director assured the Committee that UNHCR is working with all stakeholders. Similarly, partnership is imperative to enable progress on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, especially in creating adequate conditions for return and engaging development actors. Given the changes ahead in Afghanistan, this will require a focus on both solutions and contingency planning. In closing, she thanked donors for their political and financial support to operations in Asia and reiterated the importance of multilateral cooperation and burden-sharing.

D. Europe

21. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe described UNHCR's efforts to strengthen asylum, including within the framework of a Common European Asylum System. He addressed the issues of mixed migration by sea, unaccompanied and separated children, detention, integration, statelessness, the impact of the situation inside the Syrian Arab Republic upon European States, and solutions for protracted situations in the Western Balkans. With people increasingly taking to the sea in search of protection, he emphasized the legal obligation of European States to work collaboratively to reduce the loss of life, and the need for landlocked countries to support coastal countries in this regard. He spoke of the Central Mediterranean Sea Initiative and the need to create credible alternatives to secondary movements by sea in collaboration with States in North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

22. In response to recent tragedies by sea, delegations encouraged UNHCR to support the strengthening of protection systems in North Africa. Concerns were raised about human trafficking and smuggling, and delegations emphasized the importance of countries in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Europe and beyond, addressing these issues in collaboration. While progress was noted toward a common asylum system in Europe, a

significant increase in asylum applications and low recognition rates in some countries demonstrated the need for further progress. Many European delegations reiterated their support for countries hosting Syrian refugees and their commitment to burden-sharing through resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admission.

23. UNHCR's follow-up to the Sarajevo Process and its Regional Housing Programme was welcomed, and the Office was encouraged to continue supporting its partners in the identification of vulnerable individuals in need of housing support. Responding to a forthcoming recommendation to invoke the cessation clause of the 1951 Refugee Convention for those displaced during the 1991-1995 conflicts, some delegations voiced support while others expressed concern that cessation was premature and would be counter-productive, particularly in the absence of adequate conditions for sustainable return and reintegration.

24. In response to questions about the need for consultation prior to issuance of a cessation recommendation, the Director clarified that UNHCR has a responsibility to guide Member States on the interpretation of the 1951 Convention. In this regard, UNHCR may recommend cessation, but the decision rests with the States. The Director reiterated that UNHCR will not relinquish its responsibilities to refugees and will ensure that solutions are found. The Director noted the concerns about the ramifications of the recommendation, including the potential impact on the Regional Housing Programme and donor support, and reassured the Committee that UNHCR is committed to the programme and to safeguarding donor support. He thanked those donors who had pledged ongoing support in their statements and encouraged all donors to pledge at the upcoming conference in Zagreb.

E. The Middle East and North Africa

25. The Vice-Chairperson began the session by briefing the Committee on follow-up to the High-Level Segment on Solidarity and Burden-Sharing with Countries Hosting Syrian Refugees, which had been held during the 65th session of the Executive Committee. This included an informal consultative meeting in February 2014 with presentations by representatives of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as the Director of the Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa and the Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection.

26. The Director highlighted the complex humanitarian challenges confronting UNHCR, host countries and partners across the region. Most prominently, the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic had, to date, resulted in nearly 2.5 million registered refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries and an estimated 9 million people inside the country needing protection and assistance. In the context of severe violence and loss of life, the generosity of host countries and communities had been exceptional. Although UNHCR had established a field presence in six locations and initiated airlifts to some eastern areas, humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic remained severely restricted. Meanwhile, with 80 per cent of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries living outside of camps, the mounting pressure on local infrastructure and public services and the cumulative economic and social impact of the crisis required increased and sustained burden-sharing by the international community.

27. Elsewhere in the region, access to asylum and basic rights and services had become increasingly difficult for refugees and asylum seekers in Israel. Renewed violence in Anbar Province, Iraq, had forced an additional 300,000 into internal displacement. Yemen's 300,000 internally displaced persons had become increasingly vulnerable to insecurity and a worsening economic situation, while refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa arrived daily, adding to the 250,000 refugees and asylum-seekers already in the country. Smuggling, trafficking and irregular movement continue to be a problem for countries of

transit in North Africa, with migrants and asylum-seekers undertaking risky and sometimes fatal voyages across the Mediterranean.

28. Twenty-six delegations took the floor. Delegations of host countries expressed appreciation to the High Commissioner and the Executive Committee for keeping the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and its impact in neighbouring countries high on the agenda. They also expressed appreciation to both traditional and new resettlement countries for increasing spaces for resettlement and humanitarian admission. Several delegations reiterated the Assistant High Commissioner's appeal that "[f]or the countries most impacted by the Syria crisis…partnership with development actors is not only necessary, but also urgent and immediate, even as emergency needs are unfolding." One host country expressed its interest in receiving technical support to help with registration, as well as support for the education of Syrian children outside camps, who could not be integrated into the national education system.

29. Many delegations commended the tremendous generosity of the neighbouring host countries; many also updated on their efforts toward solidarity and burden-sharing, including through bilateral assistance, support to UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, and enhanced opportunities for resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admissions. A number expressed deep concern about the deteriorating situation and the lack of humanitarian access inside the Syrian Arab Republic. In this regard, delegations welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 2139 and urged its prompt and full implementation.

30. Several delegations requested further information on the situation inside Yemen. UNHCR's efforts on behalf of Iraqi refugees and IDPs were commended, and the importance of its coordination role was stressed. Several delegations encouraged UNHCR to continue working with governments to prevent *refoulement* and arbitrary detention of asylum-seekers.

31. One delegation welcomed the continuation of protection and assistance programmes for Sahrawi refugees in the camps near Tindouf in Algeria and appealed for humanitarian assistance commensurate with the needs of these refugees and welcomed the recent donors' mission to the camps. This delegation stated that a registration of the populations in the camps must be seen in the context of the United Nations' peace plan. Another delegation emphasized the international responsibility of the host country on the human rights situation in Tindouf camps and called upon UNHCR to proceed with a census and registration of the retained populations, to enhance their protection and assistance based on sound figures and real needs, pending a political solution to this regional dispute.

32. Responding to questions, the Director noted the important role of registration in identifying specific vulnerabilities and needs of refugees. Through comprehensive data collection and the use of biometric technology, registration is the basis of well-targeted and cost-effective programmes. He highlighted the value of protection-sensitive approaches including cash-based support to vulnerable groups, targeted support to host communities, and direct support to governments for affected areas. He also noted the broad participation in the Regional Response Plan, with more than 150 partners, and UNHCR's recent efforts to reinforce both capacity for coordination and accountability to beneficiaries, including through enhanced communication with refugees and host communities. The Director stressed UNHCR's collaboration with the Government of Yemen to implement its National IDP Policy. Work on mixed migration with governments and other partners throughout the region included technical support, capacity-building and advocacy to prevent detention of persons of concern as a response to irregular migration.

F. Global programmes and partnerships

33. The Director of the Division for Programme Support and Management noted that UNHCR's global programmes covered a wide spectrum of activities, which aimed to improve the quality of life for refugees and other persons of concern. He stressed that effective partnerships were key to UNHCR's success in each of these programme areas. The Director highlighted the launching of global strategies in the areas of public health, settlement and shelter, livelihoods, and safe access to fuel and energy. He also spoke about the increased use of cash-based interventions, UNHCR's updated refugee registration software, and developments in the area of information and data management, including expanded coverage of UNHCR's operational web portals.

34. The Committee voiced its support for the new global strategies and, in particular, the emphasis on protection and solutions. At the same time, follow up with the field, including training, was essential to ensure that they did not remain only on paper. There was also a need for sustained attention to monitoring and reporting on implementation. One delegation queried how the new strategies would strengthen return and reintegration and how they could bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance, ensuring sustainability. Several Member States raised the issue of funding and how the new strategies would be harmonized with UNHCR's annual budget at a time of competing priorities.

35. Regarding the use of cash-based assistance, the Committee underscored that, while it could be effective in some cases, in particular for urban populations and IDPs, there could be difficulties in terms of monitoring and ensuring its effectiveness. Concern was also expressed that cash could become a pull factor, discouraging return. UNHCR was urged to ensure coordination with partners as well as careful oversight and management of cash and voucher programmes. More information was requested on the benefits and drawbacks of such an approach. There was substantial interest in the work of the Solutions Steering Group, and UNHCR was encouraged to ensure that, while the primary focus was on protracted situations, it also address emergencies in order to prevent them from becoming protracted in the future. There was a request for UNHCR to provide a briefing to interested Member States on the new refugee registration software and biometrics system.

36. With respect to the new global strategies, the Director reassured the Committee of UNHCR's focus on implementation and sustained engagement with the field. He clarified that they were developed as a more effective and efficient way to manage these activities, rather than to seek additional resources. The Director recognized the challenges involved in the use of cash-based assistance. He stressed the importance of feasibility studies in order to have a comprehensive understanding of implications for protection, impact on the market, and sustainability over time. The Director also explained that the use of cash was not new, but that advancements in technology had allowed the organization to use this form of assistance in a different way. He agreed it was important to look at any potential pull factor, but commented that this was also an issue with other forms of assistance.

IV. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

A. Staff safety and security

37. The Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply recalled a series of recent security incidents affecting UNCHR staff and highlighted the importance of preparedness and immediate response to complex security situations. Through its security action plan for 2013- 2015, UNHCR is embedding a culture of security within the

organization and applying strategies that enable it to "stay and deliver," even in challenging environments.

38. Many delegations thanked UNHCR and humanitarian staff for their dedication and paid tribute to the staff members who have lost their lives while supporting displaced populations. Delegations recognized the complex security environment facing humanitarian staff, including the increased number of targeted attacks, with particular mention of the national staff who continue their service despite the direct impact of the crises on their lives. UNCHR was encouraged to continue working closely with the United Nations Division of Safety and Security and in partnership with other organizations. Deployments of field security staff, security training, the concept of "programme criticality," and working in partnership were welcomed approaches. Member States underscored that the security of staff is as important as the security of persons of concern.

39. The Director thanked the delegations for their support. She reiterated the importance of learning from the recent Level 3 emergencies and ensuring that security is integrated into all contingency planning and preparedness. She reassured the Committee that protecting national staff is a major concern. In regard to programme criticality, UNHCR is working on a standardized online tool to help prioritise and weigh risks.

B. Update on innovation

40. The Lead on Innovation briefed the Committee on the work of UNHCR Innovation since its inception in 2012. His presentation covered work in the following areas: (i) the 25 innovation projects currently under way; (ii) iFellow, an innovation leadership programme for UNHCR staff; (iii) UNHCRIdeas.org, the online platform for information-sharing; (iv) iCircle, the multi-stakeholder working group; (v) iFund, the dedicated investment fund for innovation projects; and (vi) Innovation Labs for project coordination.

41. Delegations taking the floor expressed support for the initiative and its creative approaches to enhancing self-reliance. Delegations were encouraged by the broad range of supporters engaged in the initiative, including other United Nations organizations and non-traditional partners from the private sector and academia. UNHCR was asked how UNHCR Innovation fits into the organization's structure.

42. In response, the Lead on Innovation reiterated that the work and resources of the Innovation team are at the disposal of the whole organization. By way of example, he explained that the Labs structurally and financially require cross-team collaboration. Similarly, the online platform, UNHCRideas.org, is designed to breakdown silos and hierarchy by sourcing ideas from all levels of staff across operations. The development of the joint guiding principles on UN humanitarian innovation is anticipated to support the long-term impact of the initiative.

C. Follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for previous years

43. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) reported on UNHCR's follow-up to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for 2012 and previous years, as contained in EC/65/SC/CRP.5. She provided a summary of the status of all open recommendations and highlighted the improvements made in addressing the key issues and recommendations made by the Board in its report on the 2012 financial statements.

44. The Committee commented positively on the concrete steps the Office was taking to address the recommendations and the fact that addressing them was considered a management priority. Acknowledging that many of the recommendations required structural changes which would take time to implement, delegations encouraged UNHCR

to use all available resources to implement them in a timely manner. The Committee welcomed the successful transition to IPSAS-compliant[1] financial statements for 2012. This was considered a major achievement. UNHCR was encouraged to implement outstanding recommendations in the area of inventory management.

45. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the briefing on UNHCR's enhanced framework for implementing with partners, which took place in the margins of the meeting. This had provided Member States with a better understanding of how UNHCR was working on the Board's recommendation in this area. There was a request for a similar briefing on UNHCR's follow-up on the recommendations related to risk management. Interest was also expressed in the possibility of reviewing and streamlining a number of recommendations that are inter-related or that have been reiterated year-to-year.

46. In response to comments made about availability of matrices tracking progress in implementing recommendations of prior years, the Controller noted that these documents were not specifically prepared for Member States but rather for the Board. UNHCR provided them to the Committee for information. The matrices were very detailed and complex but demonstrated what action UNHCR was taking. She also highlighted that UNHCR's formal report to the Executive Committee in October, which was also submitted to the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), provided a detailed summary of progress made. The Deputy High Commissioner updated the Committee on progress with respect to risk management. He indicated that a new policy on enterprise risk management, roll-out strategy and corporate risk register were being developed for implementation by the end of the year.

D. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office (IGO)

47. The Inspector General's remarks focused on the in-housing of the internal audit function, which is on hold pending solutions to some legal questions, and the IGO's critical human and financial resource situation.

48. Delegations expressed their support for the in-housing of the internal audit function and requested that a separate briefing be arranged on this subject. Delegates also expressed satisfaction with UNHCR's increased acceptance rate of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, as well as with the IGO's initiative to enhance collaboration with oversight entities in other United Nations organizations. Delegations shared concerns about the adequacy of financial and human resources provided to the IGO. UNHCR was encouraged to ensure that the IGO is appropriately resourced, and it was suggested that additional specialists should be recruited. Finally, concerns were expressed over a backlog of cases in the Investigation Service.

49. In response, the Inspector General welcomed the suggestion for an informal information-sharing meeting with Executive Committee Members on the in-housing of the internal audit function in the context of an integrated oversight service. He pledged to share the recommendations of the peer review of the Investigation Service by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), once these are available. He clarified that the backlog of investigation cases had been reduced considerably, despite an increase in the number of cases opened. However, in order to achieve this, the Investigation Service has had to rely heavily on consultants and staff-in-between-assignments.

50. The Deputy High Commissioner supported the Inspector General's work with regard to in-housing the internal audit function.

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[1] Refers to the International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

V. Programme budgets and funding

51. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM) and the Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) jointly presented the update on programme budget and funding for 2013 and 2014 (EC/65/SC/CRP.6/Rev.1). The Controller provided an update on the financial situation in 2013. She also gave a brief overview of the 2014 annual budget, which was approved by the Executive Committee in October 2013, including the four supplementary budgets that had since been created to respond to new emergencies. The Director of DER then commented on UNHCR's funding situation in 2013 and projections for 2014, showing comparative positions from earlier years in respect of income versus budget; examples of funding gaps in 2013 and their impact, as well as funding gaps and contributions per region; trends in the timing of voluntary contributions; a comparison of contributions toward supplementary appeals and annual budgets; earmarking trends; contributions by region; sources of funding, including from UN and pooled funding mechanisms; and trends in private-sector fundraising income and investment.

52. While supporting the global needs assessment (GNA) approach to budgeting, which provided a picture of the operational requirements across the globe, the Committee expressed concern over the widening funding gap. One delegation noted that the increase in the budget did not seem to correspond with the growth in figures of persons of concern. UNHCR was encouraged to develop the GNA as a rationalized and effective needs-based budgeting system. The Office was also requested to be as transparent as possible with both partners and donors as it undertakes its prioritization exercise and allocates resources to the field. It was important for donors to have a clearer understanding regarding UNHCR's use of unearmarked funds.

53. The Committee expressed support for the efforts to improve the quality of the budget presentation. Several delegations queried what action UNHCR was taking to ensure adequate oversight and effective management of the increased resources it was receiving. In terms of fundraising, the Office was congratulated on its record high mobilization efforts. It was encouraged to continue to expand its donor base and engage with non-traditional donors. The importance of UNHCR receiving predictable funding was also highlighted by a number of delegations.

54. In terms of the improvements in the budget presentation, the Controller commented that this was thanks to the information provided by delegations in terms of what was lacking and what Member States wanted to see in the document. She remarked that this dialogue should continue so that UNHCR can continue improving the budget presentation and eliminate information that was no longer deemed relevant. The Controller explained the complexities of the prioritization process and the difficult decisions that management had to take in light of changing scenarios, new emergencies which required reprogramming, and the unpredictability of funding. She explained that earmarking was in itself a form of prioritization, hence constraining the High Commissioner's flexibility. Regarding oversight, the Controller stressed the commitment of the organization, starting with senior management, to strengthen internal control and related policies. She mentioned various initiatives that were underway, including the establishment of an internal control and accountability committee and the development of an internal control framework.

55. The Director of DER expressed appreciation for the continued support of the Committee, including the host countries. Regarding the relationship between funding increases and population increases, he noted that starting an emergency operation required a different level of funding than maintaining an operation. The Head of Private Sector Fundraising highlighted that increased support from the private sector was not only reflective of the considerable efforts and investments made over the past years, but also evidence of the enormous support for UNHCR's work globally, among the public and the

corporate world. Beyond funding, she stressed the benefits of building partnerships with corporate donors in terms of advocacy and finding operational solutions to challenges in the field. She informed the Committee that the Office was working on a new five-year strategy to enhance the level of funding from the private sector.

56. The decision on budgets and funding for 2013 and 2014 contained in annex I was adopted.

VI. Programme/protection policy

UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017

57. UNHCR's draft programme in the United Nations Proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017 (A/69/16 (Prog.21)) was reviewed. Delegations proposed two amendments to the draft programme: (1) that voluntary repatriation and local integration be reflected in the indicators; and (2) that the description of the objective of the organization be amended to reflect language from General Assembly Resolution 58/153. In relation to the second amendment, the text would read as follows:

> *To ensure international protection to refugees and, as applicable, other persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to achieve permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance.*

58. Another delegation noted that program approaches including gender mainstreaming, participatory assessments, and safety and security, were relevant for all populations of concern, not only refugees.

59. UNHCR took note of the proposed amendments and comments and reassured delegations that they would be conveyed to the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the United Nations Secretariat in New York. The amendments would be reflected in the consolidated conference room paper, containing changes requested by all relevant sectoral, functional and regional bodies, for presentation to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its 2014 session in June/July.

60. The Standing Committee adopted the decision contained in annex II of the present document, taking note of the draft programme, on the understanding that the requested amendments would be transmitted to New York.

VII. International protection

A. Oral update on the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges

61. The Director of the Division of International Protection provided a summary of the outcome of the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which focused on the protection of IDPs. He reported that follow-up was proceeding along four work streams: (i) reviewing UNHCR's policy on its engagement with IDPs and developing operational guidelines in certain areas; (ii) strengthening UNHCR's engagement with IDPs, both institutionally and in its role as lead of the global protection cluster; (iii) supporting the development and implementation of legislation and policies on internal displacement; and (iv) strengthening partnerships with a range of stakeholders, especially development actors, to intensify the solutions potential of IDP interventions.

62. Delegations commended UNHCR for having chosen this theme for the Dialogue. The unprecedented level of participation demonstrated that the discussion was both timely and needed. A number of Member States expressed support for UNHCR's commitment to strengthen its engagement with this population and review its policy on IDPs, and asked to be kept informed of progress made. At the same time, UNHCR was reminded that its intervention in cases of internal displacement should be based on the principle of consent and request by the country concerned and should not come at the expense of the Office's activities for refugees. In terms of the organization of the annual Dialogue, one delegation reiterated its request that UNHCR limit the number of small group sessions, which would allow participants with small representations to follow the discussions fully.

63. In response, the Director agreed with States that had emphasized the need to adopt an action and solutions-oriented approach. It was precisely with this in mind that UNHCR was looking at developing better operational guidance, including from a solutions angle. The Director also took note of the suggestion to review the format of the Dialogue.

B. Introduction of the ExCom Conclusion theme

64. The Executive Committee Rapporteur updated the Committee on the progress made thus far in identifying a theme for the 2014 conclusion on international protection. Eight proposals had been received by the Committee. The Rapporteur commented that the record number of proposals was a clear demonstration of both the interest of the international community and the importance of the task.

65. Delegations commended the Rapporteur for his transparent and consultative facilitation of the process. Many delegations noted that they were encouraged by the number of proposals. Concerns were raised that negotiations on the selection of a theme and past negotiations on the text have been unnecessarily drawn out. Delegations also mentioned that host countries have a particular interest in the conclusions process as many of these conclusions impact them directly.

66. In response, the Rapporteur agreed that the priority must be on developing a conclusion that balances protection with sustainable solutions and focuses on matters that are operational and have a direct benefit for people of concern. He expressed his commitment to ongoing informal consultations with the Committee to move the process forward.

VIII. Any other business

67. Under any other business, the Chairperson proposed that the Committee adopt the reports of the Standing Committee meetings through an electronic circulation process. He explained that the report of the meeting is normally adopted by the Standing Committee at its next meeting. As the reports inform the work of the Executive Committee during its annual plenary session each October, they become official UN documents, requiring translation into all six UN languages. Keeping in mind the stricter document processing requirements of the United Nations documentation service, circulating the reports electronically would allow for faster processing and for the Secretariat to submit them to the United Nations in a timely manner. This has the added advantage for the Committee of reviewing and adopting the report within weeks, rather than months, of a meeting. Following circulation of the draft report and absent any amendments proposed, the report would then be considered adopted. There were no objections to the proposal.

Annex I

Decision on budgets and funding for 2013 and 2014

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its sixty-fourth session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1132) as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the fifty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2013,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-third session, approved programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's revised 2012-2013 biennial programme budget amounting to $3,924.2 million for 2013;

Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-fourth session, approved programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's 2014-2015 biennial programme budget amounting to $5,307.8 million for 2014;

Notes that the 2013 supplementary budgets amounted to $1,413.7 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

Notes the reduction of $2.5 million for Mali;

Notes that the 2014 supplementary budgets currently amount to $394.3 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;

Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's 2014 annual budget to a total of $5,702.1 million;

Recognizes that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2014 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets, and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs; and

Urges Member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the 2014 annual budget.

Annex II

Decision on UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017

The Standing Committee,

Takes note of the attached *Programme 21: International protection, durable solutions, and assistance to refugees* of the biennial programme plan of the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2016-2017.